

Dear Distinguished Members of the Children's Committee,

I am writing in support of HB #6722, with some modifications. Regretfully I can't testify in person as it's school break and we had plans to be away. When my son was in the 7th grade (six years ago) he played competitive "travel soccer" run by a youth soccer organization. During a practice on a field in Westport, he was knocked down then inadvertently kicked in the head with a cleat. He was assisted to the side of the field where he rested. After a rest the coach asked him if he wanted to get back on the field. My son told him that he couldn't and he thought he should go home. It took a while for me to get a call because my son couldn't remember our phone number and the coach didn't have it. A teammate contacted a parent who found me. When I arrived to the field my son couldn't walk unsupported and he couldn't read street signs. He had a pounding headache. I brought him directly to the ER.

My son knew not to go back on the field because a year earlier he suffered a concussion that kept him out of school for three months. He was well educated on concussions after many doctor visits. He knew to not attempt to get back on the field. If he hadn't had this education, he may have gone back out. The coach clearly didn't have a protocol for dealing with someone who had been kicked in the head or know the concussion signs and symptoms to look for. After this second concussion, my son stopped playing contact sports but my personal mission to begin educating others began. I called the head of the soccer organization and offered to personally come to a coaches' meeting and train the coaches. He accepted my offer. I'm not a qualified trainer or a medical professional but I pulled information from the CDC and put it in a Powerpoint for the coaches. I gave them a quiz at the end. I didn't want another child to be in my son's situation and make the wrong decisions.

It's time we educate our youth athletes, their parents, and coaches about the signs and symptoms of concussions. Several states and countless municipalities are providing more protection to their youth than is being proposed in HB #6722. This law doesn't go far enough. In addition to parent and athlete education, coaches need to be trained, there should be a remove from play protocol as well as medical clearance required to return. The special task force instated as a result of last year's youth concussion bill should continue to meet for another year to look further into ways to make our youth sports safer, approve training for the youth coaches, as well as develop some standardized tools and forms for the state to use.

I realize this training is an extra commitment for youth coaches. If they aren't willing to ensure the safety of our children, they probably shouldn't be volunteering as coaches.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Parents Concussion Coalition